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Fourteenth semi-annual report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1559 (2004)

I. Background

1. The current report is my fourteenth semi-annual report on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1559 (2004). It reviews and assesses the process of the implementation of the resolution since my previous report issued on 19 April 2011 (S/2011/258). It notes the absence of tangible progress on key provisions of the resolution, and highlights concerns that continue to impede efforts to strengthen Lebanon's sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence, which is the main objective of the resolution.

2. Lebanon was in effect without a Government during the first half of 2011. In the six months leading to the formation of the new Government by Prime Minister Mikati, political polarization deepened markedly and Lebanon grew increasingly susceptible to the regional political tumult, especially in the neighbouring Syrian Arab Republic. The absence of political authority generated institutional paralysis and a deterioration of security conditions in the country. In addition it halted processes that are fundamental for the implementation of this and other Security Council resolutions pertaining to Lebanon.

3. On 13 June, then Prime Minister-Designate Najib Mikati announced the formation of a new Government. The new Cabinet is composed of 30 ministers, the majority of whom belong to the 8 March Alliance.

4. On 7 July, following three days of intense debate in Parliament underlining the deep division between the 8 March and 14 March Alliances, Prime Minister Mikati's Government won a vote of confidence. The 68 Members of Parliament out of 128 who voted in favour represent the new majority, composed, inter alia, of Hizbullah, the Amal movement, the Free Patriotic Movement, the Progressive Socialist Party, the El Marada Party and others. The 60 Members of Parliament of the 14 March Alliance boycotted the vote of confidence to protest what they termed a coup by Hizbullah to reverse the results of the 2009 parliamentary elections that the 14 March Alliance had won. In their opinion, Hizbullah and the Syrian Arab Republic imposed the new government.

5. During the reporting period, the work of the Special Tribunal for Lebanon has remained a major issue in the country. On 28 June, Pre-Trial Judge Daniel Fransen

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of the Special Tribunal for Lebanon confirmed an indictment relating to the assassination of former Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri and other Lebanese citizens. The indictment and accompanying arrest warrants were transmitted to the Lebanese authorities on 30 June 2011. On 9 August, the Lebanese authorities reported to the Tribunal on the measures that they have taken to search for, arrest and transfer those accused in the attack on 14 February 2005. In his report, the Lebanese Prosecutor General stated that so far none of the four people who are accused has been detained. On 17 August, the Pre-Trial Judge ordered that his decision confirming the indictment, as well as the indictment itself, be made public. Meanwhile, to date, the payment of the contribution of the Government of Lebanon to the Tribunal budget remains pending. I have repeatedly expressed my full support for the important work of the Tribunal and reiterated my call for full cooperation from the Government of Lebanon, including for the funding of the Tribunal.

6. Over the last six months, developments in the neighbouring Syrian Arab Republic have taken a growing toll on Lebanon's political dynamics and have deepened political and sectarian divisions in the country. The political divide between the 8 March and 14 March Alliances has increasingly revolved around the question of Syria, with demonstrations both in favour and against the Syrian regime taking place in several Lebanese cities.

II. Implementation of resolution 1559 (2004)

7. Since the adoption of Security Council resolution 1559 (2004) on 2 September 2004, several of its provisions have been implemented. Presidential and parliamentary elections took place in a free and fair manner. The Syrian Arab Republic withdrew its troops and military assets from Lebanon in April 2005. Lebanon and Syria established full diplomatic relations in 2009.

8. Yet, other provisions remain to be implemented. The delineation of the Syrian-Lebanese border, which was strongly encouraged by the Security Council in its resolution 1680 (2006), has not yet taken place. More importantly, the existence and activities of Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias continue to pose a threat to the stability of the country and the region, and highlight the need for the Government of Lebanon and the Lebanese Armed Forces to increase their efforts to exercise a full monopoly on the use of force throughout Lebanon. More needs to be done to achieve the full implementation of resolution 1559 (2004), and to maintain the achievements already accomplished.

9. I took careful note that, in his address at the general debate of the sixty-sixth session of the General Assembly on 21 September, President Sleiman renewed the commitment of Lebanon to respecting resolutions of international legitimacy. I also took note that Prime Minister Mikati, in his address to the Security Council on 27 September, affirmed Lebanon's full respect for all United Nations resolutions. Since he took office last July, Prime Minister Mikati has repeatedly renewed this commitment in public pronouncements.

10. Over the last six months, there has been no concrete progress towards the implementation of the remaining provisions of the resolution, in particular in the context of growing political tensions in Lebanon and the escalating crisis in the Syrian Arab Republic.

11. My representatives and I have remained in regular contact with all parties in Lebanon over the reporting period, as well as with relevant regional and international leaders. I met President Michel Sleiman in New York on 22 September, and Prime Minister Najib Mikati on 27 September. On both occasions I expressed my disappointment at the lack of progress in the implementation of the resolution and renewed my call on the Lebanese leaders for the full implementation of the resolution.

A. Sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and political independence of Lebanon

12. Resolution 1559 (2004) aims at strengthening the sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity, and political independence of Lebanon under the sole and exclusive authority of the Government of Lebanon throughout Lebanon, in line with the Taif Agreement of 1989, to which all the political parties in Lebanon have committed themselves. This objective has remained the highest priority of my efforts to facilitate the implementation of all resolutions pertaining to Lebanon.

13. In its resolution 1680 (2006), the Security Council strongly encouraged the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic to respond positively to the request of the Government of Lebanon to delineate their common border. I have maintained my efforts to encourage Syria and Lebanon to achieve the full delineation of their common border. The delineation and the demarcation of Lebanon's boundaries remains an essential element to guarantee the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity. It is also an essential step to allow for proper border control. No progress was achieved during the reporting period towards the delineation and the demarcation of the border between Lebanon and Syria, despite commitments made at several summit meetings between Syria and Lebanon since August 2008. The joint Lebanese-Syrian border committee that is tasked with this matter has never convened. So far, only Lebanon has designated its participants to this committee. While acknowledging the bilateral nature of border delineation, progress on this matter remains an obligation of the two countries under resolution 1680 (2006), derived from 1559 (2004).

14. At the backdrop of the political and human rights crisis in the Syrian Arab Republic, which has resulted in the killing of at least 3,000 people since March, several thousands of Syrian nationals have crossed the border into Lebanon to seek refuge from repression. In this context, in several instances, the Syrian army opened fire across the border, carried out incursions into Lebanon and raided houses to capture fleeing nationals and army deserters. These incursions have become more frequent over the last few weeks. On 6 October, Syrian troops penetrated Lebanese territory and killed a Syrian national on Lebanese soil.

15. The continued occupation by the Israel Defense Forces of the northern part of the village of Ghajar and an adjacent area north of the Blue Line stands in violation of the sovereignty of Lebanon and resolutions 1559 (2004) and 1701 (2006). My representatives and I have continued to engage closely with both parties to facilitate the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the area, as detailed in my last report to the Security Council on the implementation of 1701 (2006) (S/2011/406).

16. Efforts in relation to the issue of the Shab'a Farms area have not recorded any progress, as I still have not received any responses from either the Syrian Arab

Republic or Israel to the provisional definition of the area contained in my report on the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006), issued on 30 October 2007 (S/2007/641).

17. During the reporting period, intrusions into Lebanese airspace by Israeli aircraft and unmanned aerial vehicles continued on a regular basis, constituting violations of Lebanese sovereignty and resolutions 1559 (2004) and 1701 (2006). The Government of Lebanon has repeatedly protested these violations. I have deplored these violations and demanded that they cease immediately. Israeli authorities claim in turn that these overflights are carried out for security reasons, citing alleged breaches to the arms embargo enforced pursuant to resolution 1701 (2006).

B. Extension of control of the Government of Lebanon over all Lebanese territory

18. The Government of Lebanon has reaffirmed in its ministerial declaration its intention to extend the authority of the State over all Lebanese territory, as called for by resolution 1559 (2004) and the 1989 Taif Agreement. The Lebanese Armed Forces and the Internal Security Forces play a crucial role in implementing this commitment. Over the reporting period, several incidents demonstrated the need for the Government of Lebanon to do more in order to reach this important objective.

19. As I reported (S/2011/406), on 27 May 2011, a convoy of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) was struck by a roadside bomb in the main north-south coastal road north of Saida, wounding six UNIFIL peacekeepers serving with the Italian contingent. The circumstances surrounding this direct terrorist attack against UNIFIL personnel are still under investigation by the Lebanese Armed Forces. On 26 July, another UNIFIL convoy was struck by a roadside bomb near a southern entrance to Saida. As a result, six UNIFIL peacekeepers serving with the French contingent were wounded and one vehicle was damaged. This was the second time in less than two months, in the same area, that the United Nations was directly targeted. I strongly condemned both attacks and urged the Government of Lebanon to take all the necessary measures to protect United Nations personnel in the country and to undertake a thorough and transparent investigation of both incidents. In this context, I welcomed the statement by the Lebanese Higher Defence Council of 12 August 2011, in which it committed to bring to justice the perpetrators of those attacks and to protect the United Nations Force.

20. Over the reporting period, on some occasions, UNIFIL was again denied its freedom of movement in its area of operations, which endangered the safety and security of the United Nations peacekeepers. The freedom of movement of UNIFIL and the security and safety of its personnel are integral to the effective execution of the mandate of the force. The primary responsibility for ensuring the freedom of movement of UNIFIL in its area of operations, and to protect its personnel, lies with the Lebanese authorities.

21. Several security incidents involving the use of weapons and explosives in populated areas continued to occur during the reporting period. In early June, two bomb hoaxes were reported, one in Beirut and the other in Zahle. Two additional explosions took place in Beirut, on 29 July and 11 August, in circumstances that remain unclear. The latter killed two people who were reportedly handling an

explosive device and injured two others. On 13 August, there was a shooting directed at the property of Member of Parliament Suleiman Franjieh. On 16 September two Internal Security Forces personnel were injured when armed men opened fire on their patrol in the western Bekaa area. On 1 October, a woman and her two daughters were injured in Tripoli as a result of the explosion of a hand grenade. These events are indicative of growing security threats in the country.

22. The reporting period was also marked by demonstrations of solidarity or protests in relation to the evolving situation in the Syrian Arab Republic. Some such gatherings involved the use of weapons as demonstrated by the clashes in Tripoli in the areas of Bab El-Tabbaneh and Jabal Mohsen on 17 June 2011. Other violent incidents took place elsewhere in the country during the reporting period.

23. All these occurrences confirm yet again the possession of lethal weapons by non-State actors. They are also a stark reminder that the Lebanese authorities must do more to impose law and order throughout the country.

24. Security sources in Lebanon have continued to report shootings and explosions in and around paramilitary infrastructures in the eastern Bekaa Valley belonging to the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command (PFLP-GC) and Fatah al-Intifada, confirming that paramilitary training occurs in these facilities. The permanent presence of such bases along the Syrian-Lebanese border adds to the general porosity of parts of the land border and poses a challenge for the control of the border by the Lebanese security forces. It also makes the delineation of the border more difficult.

25. Given the above-mentioned concerns and continued existence and activities of militias in Lebanon, improving the management and control of Lebanon's land borders is critical to prevent the illegal flow of weapons to armed groups. A comprehensive border management strategy is needed. Government of Lebanon officials acknowledge the porous nature of the border and the possibility that arms smuggling occurs. The Government of Lebanon has so far taken limited steps to confront the issue. The effective management of the border between Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic also continues to be adversely affected by the absence of a delineation of the border.

26. Several Member States have continued to express deep concern over the illegal transfer of weapons across the land borders. I take these reports very seriously, but the United Nations does not have the means to verify them independently. I have raised this matter with Lebanese officials and urged them to increase efforts in a more systematic way to ensure strict control along the border. In addition, all States must take the necessary measures to prevent the transfer of arms to groups outside the control of the Government of Lebanon. This is a critical factor for stability in Lebanon and the region.

C. Disbanding and disarmament of Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias

27. In its resolution 1559 (2004), the Security Council calls for the disarming and disbanding of all Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias. This remaining key provision of the resolution is yet to be implemented. It merely reflects and reaffirms a decision that all Lebanese committed themselves to in the Taif Agreement in 1989, in the aftermath of the civil war. This agreement led at the time to Lebanese militias —

with the exception of Hizbullah — giving up their weapons. This agreement must be preserved and implemented by all in order to avoid the spectre of a renewed confrontation among the Lebanese.

28. Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias continue to operate in the country outside of the control of the Government in serious violation of resolution 1559 (2004). While several groups across the political spectrum in Lebanon possess weapons outside Government control, the armed component of Hizbullah is the most significant and most heavily armed Lebanese militia in the country, reaching almost the capacities of a regular army. The leadership of Hizbullah itself continues to acknowledge that it maintains a substantial military arsenal. In addition, there are a series of Palestinian armed groups operating in the country inside and outside the refugee camps.

29. Over the reporting period, there was yet again no tangible progress towards the disbanding and disarming of Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias as called for in the Taif Agreement and resolution 1559 (2004). Since the adoption of the resolution in 2004, with the exception of the National Dialogue session of 2006, which took some preliminary decisions on the matter, no concrete steps have been taken to address this crucial issue, which stands at the heart of the sovereignty and the political independence of the country. Meanwhile, since the passing of the resolution, several Lebanese groups and individuals have expressed their dismay at the presence of militias in the country. The continued existence of Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias undermines the rights of every Lebanese citizen to live without fear of physical harm and the consolidation of Lebanon as a democratic State and the stability of the country and the region.

30. The issue of Hizbullah's arms is at the forefront of the political debate in Lebanon, as manifested during the parliamentary debate around the ministerial declaration. The previous tenuous consensus on the legitimacy of the arms of Hizbullah in Lebanon has broken down. Opposition figures are singling out Hizbullah's weapons as the single most destabilizing factor in the country. On 12 July, former Prime Minister and opposition leader Saad Hariri launched an attack against Hizbullah's weapons, which he deemed Lebanon's main problem and a tool to paralyse the political life and threaten people. On International Day of Democracy on 15 September, Hariri qualified the threat of arms as "democracy's greatest enemy". Hizbullah rejected those statements and claims that its arsenal being separate from that of the Lebanese State is for defensive purposes against Israel.

31. On several occasions, I have stated my firm conviction that the disarmament of Hizbullah and other militias can best be achieved through a Lebanese-led political process that will achieve the ultimate goal of no weapons or armed forces in Lebanon other than those of the Lebanese State. For that purpose, I recall that the National Dialogue, whose main mandate is to develop a national defence strategy that will address the critical issue of weapons outside the control of the State, reconvened after the May 2008 events, but has not met since 4 November 2010.

32. Regrettably, the National Dialogue has fallen short of expectations in terms of the development of a national defence strategy. While President Sleiman has expressed on numerous occasions his intention to reconvene the National Dialogue, there is no indication at this stage that it will happen soon, given that the 14 March Alliance participants have announced that they would attend only if the forum

discusses Hizbullah's weapons as the first item on its agenda. The latter proposition was rejected by Hizbullah and its allies, which would not oppose the reconvening of the National Dialogue, provided it would stick to the generic formula of the development of a "national defence strategy".

33. With respect to the situation of Palestinians in Lebanon, I am glad to report that the leadership of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) has reiterated its call upon all Palestinians in Lebanon to respect the sovereignty and political independence of Lebanon and to adhere to Lebanese law and security requirements. The President of the Palestinian Authority and Chairman of the PLO, Mahmoud Abbas, visited Lebanon from 16 to 19 August. During his visit, he stated unequivocally his position that the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon do not need arms to defend themselves because "the Lebanese State, represented in its government, army and Parliament, would protect them".

34. This declaration came in the context of heightened tension in the Ain al-Hilweh refugee camp. On 5 and 6 August heavy clashes erupted in the camp following an assassination attempt on a senior Fatah figure, Colonel Mahmoud Issa. The following day, two suspects from the Jund al-Sham militia were apprehended and handed over to the Lebanese authorities, which prompted armed clashes between the group and Fatah militia members. A ceasefire was agreed upon after hours of fighting that had left a number of people injured. Considerable material damage was also caused by the heavy fighting. One of the schools of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East was hit by a rocket-propelled grenade, resulting in material damage to two classrooms. Refugees voiced their anger and demanded compensations from the responsible parties for their financial loss.

35. The situation in most of the 12 Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon has remained relatively stable, although a few shooting incidents and explosions were registered in some of the camps, in particular in Ain al-Hilweh, as mentioned above. The threat of internal violence that could potentially spill over into surrounding areas still exists in a number of camps, as some of them continue to provide safe haven for those who seek to escape the authority of the State.

36. During his visit, President Abbas also discussed the dire humanitarian conditions of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. Prime Minister Mikati pledged that his Government would do its best to improve living conditions. In this context, the labour reforms for Palestinian refugees in Lebanon that was agreed to by the Parliament last year are yet to be properly implemented. The United Nations continues to urge the Lebanese authorities to improve the conditions in which Palestinian refugees live in Lebanon, without prejudice to the eventual resolution of the Palestinian refugee question in the context of a comprehensive peace agreement in the region, in particular given the detrimental effects of dismal living conditions on the wider security situation.

37. Lebanese authorities have acknowledged the existence of good cooperation between the Lebanese Armed Forces and Palestinian security officials in the camps. However, with the exception of the Nahr al-Bared camp, Lebanese authorities do not maintain a permanent presence inside the camps, despite the fact that the Cairo agreement of 1969, which permitted the presence of Palestinian armed forces in the refugees' camps, was annulled by the Lebanese Parliament in 1987. More will need to be done to contain tensions and potential violence in the camps.

38. The presence of Palestinian armed groups outside the camps continues to challenge the ability of Lebanon to exercise full sovereignty over its territory. I have called upon the Government of Lebanon to dismantle the Damascus-headquartered PFLP-GC and Fatah al-Intifada military bases in the country, and on the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic to cooperate with these efforts. Regrettably, there was no progress during the reporting period towards the disarming of such groups, as called for and agreed upon by Lebanese leaders at the National Dialogue session of 2006 and reaffirmed in subsequent sessions of the National Dialogue since 2008.

III. Observations

39. On the basis of what I have detailed above, I am disappointed that I cannot report on any further progress in the implementation of resolution 1559 (2004) over the last six months. The process of the implementation of the resolution has reached a status of quasi-standstill for more than two years. Much work lies ahead for Lebanon in the implementation of resolution 1559 (2004).

40. I am mindful that the remaining provisions of the resolution to be implemented are indeed the thorniest and that Lebanon has been affected by recent events in the region, particularly the violent repression of popular protests against the regime and the profound political crisis in the Syrian Arab Republic. However, I am firmly convinced that it is in the interest of Lebanon and the Lebanese to make progress towards the full implementation of the resolution for the long-term stability of the country and the region.

41. I have repeatedly cautioned that the widespread proliferation of weapons outside of the control of the State, combined with the continued existence of heavily armed militias are altogether ominous for domestic peace and the prosperity of Lebanon. Armed groups defying the control of the State are incompatible with the objective of strengthening the sovereignty and political independence of Lebanon and with the protection of Lebanon's unique pluralistic system and the rights of Lebanese citizens. I condemn the possession and the use of illegal weapons wherever they occur in Lebanon, in particular in populated areas. For this reason, I appeal to all parties and States to immediately halt all efforts to transfer and acquire weapons, and build paramilitary capacities outside the authority of the State. All foreign financial and material support for Lebanon must be channelled transparently through the Government of Lebanon only.

42. The issue of Hizbullah's weapons has become a central bone of contention in the political debate in Lebanon with confessional overtones, but with implications for all Lebanese. Hizbullah's arsenal creates an atmosphere of intimidation and poses a key challenge to the safety of Lebanese civilians and to the Government monopoly on the legitimate use of force. I call yet again upon the leaders of Hizbullah to immediately disarm and transform the group into a Lebanese political party, consistent with the requirements of the Taif Agreement and resolution 1559 (2004). In a democratic State, a political party cannot maintain its own militia. This is a fundamental anomaly that is incompatible with Lebanon's high ideals of the protection of human rights and democracy.

43. As Hizbullah maintains close ties with regional States, I call upon these States to support and assist in the transformation of the armed group into a solely political

party and its disarmament, consistent with the requirements of the Taif Agreement and resolution 1559 (2004), in the best interests of regional peace and stability. This requirement has become even more urgent against the backdrop of the ongoing political upheavals across the region.

44. I remain convinced that the disarmament of armed groups in Lebanon, particularly Hizbullah, can best be achieved through a Lebanese-led political process, though this process cannot make headway until external actors cease their military support to Hizbullah and the group itself accepts to discuss its arsenal in good faith. I regret that the National Dialogue has not reconvened in almost a year. The end result of such a process should be no weapons or authority in Lebanon other than those of the Lebanese State. To this end, I note the ongoing progress made by the Lebanese Armed Forces in developing their operational capabilities.

45. The absence of progress on the disarming and disbanding of Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias puts Lebanon in violation of its international obligations. Lebanon can and must revitalize the efforts to address the challenge posed by the continued presence of arms outside the authority of the Lebanese State. Such arms inherently jeopardize and undermine the ability of the State to exercise full sovereignty and control over its territory, as called for by the Taif Agreement and resolution 1559 (2004). This applies in particular to the considerable military capabilities that Hizbullah continues to maintain. Irrespective of the particular composition of the Government, the authority of the Lebanese State can only be consolidated through progress on the issue of arms beyond its control. I therefore call upon President Sleiman and Prime Minister Mikati to take tangible measures in this regard without delay.

46. I also encourage President Sleiman and the Government of Prime Minister Mikati to implement decisions taken in the past by the National Dialogue, such as the dismantling of Palestinian military bases maintained by the Damascus-headquartered PFLP-GC and Fatah al-Intifada outside the refugee camps. Under three Prime Ministers and two Presidents, there has regrettably been no progress on this issue. The commitment of the new Government policy platform to the implementation of previous National Dialogue decisions must be materialized. These bases, most of which straddle the border between Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic, undermine Lebanese sovereignty and challenge the country's ability to manage its land borders. Mindful that these two militias maintain close regional ties, I renew my call upon the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic to assist in this process.

47. I also urge donors to continue their support for UNRWA, which faces funding shortfalls in its regular programmes and for the reconstruction of the Nahr al-Bared camp. I recall that two thirds of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon live in dire poverty. I therefore call upon the Government of Prime Minister Mikati to implement amendments to the Lebanese Labour Code and Social Security Law adopted in August 2010, so as to improve the employment prospects of Palestinian refugees. I am convinced that addressing the difficult conditions of Palestinian refugees will have a positive impact on the coexistence of Lebanese and Palestinians and hence, on national security and stability. Improving the living conditions and human rights of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon does not prejudice the resolution of the Palestinian refugee question in the context of a comprehensive Arab-Israeli peace.

48. The profound political crisis in the Syrian Arab Republic has further hindered progress towards the delineation and the demarcation of the border between Lebanon and Syria. I regret the absence of progress and urge the two countries to move forward on this issue without further delay, which has a critical impact on enhancing border control.

49. I urge the Government of Lebanon to move forward and adopt and implement a comprehensive border management strategy in the coming period. Doing so would enable better control of Lebanon's international borders and prevent the illegal transfers of arms.

50. I am deeply concerned at the impact of developments in the Syrian Arab Republic on the political and security situation in Lebanon. I strongly deplore the violent incursions and raids into Lebanese towns and villages by Syrian security forces that resulted in death and injury. I call upon the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic to immediately cease all such incursions, and to respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Lebanon, in accordance with Security Council resolution 1559 (2004). These incursions and the ongoing crisis in Syria carry the potential of igniting further tensions inside Lebanon and beyond.

51. Security incidents during the reporting period highlighted the need for Lebanese security forces to do more to prevent and respond to acts of violence. In this context, increased support for the Lebanese Armed Forces and the Internal Security Forces remains critical. They have continued to act with resolve, and their capacity has been gradually strengthened with the assistance of international donors. I am grateful to those countries that are helping to equip and to train the Lebanese Armed Forces and the Internal Security Forces, and I urge the international community to continue this critically required support. This is essential to enable the Lebanese Armed Forces and the Internal Security Forces to assume effectively their responsibility under relevant Security Council resolutions.

52. I deplore the continued Israeli violations of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Lebanon. I call upon Israel to adhere to its obligations under relevant Security Council resolutions and withdraw its forces from the northern part of the village of Ghajar and an adjacent area north of the Blue Line, and to cease its overflights of Lebanese airspace, which raise tension, undermine the credibility of Lebanese security services, increase the risk of unintended conflict and generate anxiety among the civilian population.

53. Momentous events under way across the Middle East bear tremendous opportunities for change but also pose challenges of prolonged uncertainty and potential instability. Developments in the Syrian Arab Republic inevitably impact Lebanon. At the same time, this should not detract from the full implementation of this and all other Security Council resolutions pertaining to Lebanon, which remain the best way to ensure the long-term prosperity and stability of Lebanon as a democratic State.

54. It is imperative that the spirit of cooperation and respect for the principles of coexistence and security in Lebanon prevail, as must domestic peace without intimidation by armed groups. I remain concerned that the combination of mistrust among the parties and the continued presence of militias could lead to tensions and possible insecurity and instability in Lebanon and beyond. I urge all political leaders to transcend sectarian and individual interests and genuinely promote the future and

the interests of the State. They must preserve the comprehensive political framework of coexistence in mutual respect, as set out in the Taif Agreement.

55. More than three months after he assumed office, Prime Minister Mikati has managed to contain growing tensions in the country and, to some extent, has revitalized national governance and legislative processes that were paralysed in the absence of a functioning Government during the first half of 2011. I was heartened when he visited the Lebanese Armed Forces and UNIFIL in southern Lebanon just a few days after his Government was sworn in. That was a tangible sign of support for the work of the United Nations in Lebanon. I also welcome Prime Minister Mikati's pledge to provide humanitarian assistance to Syrian refugees in Lebanon. I remain, however, keenly aware of the challenges ahead and the political polarization revolving around the Special Tribunal for Lebanon, the weapons of Hizbullah and the unrest in neighbouring Syrian Arab Republic. While I commend the Prime Minister for his repeated public pronouncement calling for Lebanon's full adherence to its international obligations without selectivity, I look forward to the Government of Lebanon translating that commitment into tangible action, and I stand ready to assist it to reach this crucial objective.

56. In conclusion, I share the opinion of President Sleiman as outlined in his address to the Security Council on 27 September, in which he stated that the implementation of Security Council resolutions is the best guarantee to ensure peace and security and prevent conflicts. I remain firmly committed to the implementation of resolution 1559 (2004) for the sake of regional peace and stability, in a particularly difficult and challenging time. I therefore call on all parties and actors to fully abide by resolutions 1559 (2004), 1680 (2006) and 1701 (2006). I will continue my efforts for the purpose of the full implementation of these and all other Security Council resolutions pertaining to Lebanon.